

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Benigno Tapucol

*"I like find a better job again, but same thing, hard. But when during the [1938] strike [by Filipino workers at Kekaha Plantation, which was unsuccessful], we have every place strike and no more good cooperation strike. When the Japanese go work and us Filipino no work, no can get win, no more win. . . . So in Kōloa my friend [said], 'Oh, more better you come Kōloa because they need plenty people over there to work.' So, come back again [to Kōloa Plantation] until now."*

Benigno Tapucol was born February 8, 1908 in Santo Domingo, Ilocos Sur, Philippines. His parents were rice farmers and sold cement which they produced from lime. Benigno completed two years of school.

In 1927, Benigno, along with his younger brother, immigrated to Hawai'i to work on the sugar plantations. After landing in Honolulu, they were assigned to Keālia Sugar Plantation on Kaua'i. After two months, they both joined their older brother at Kōloa Sugar Plantation. At Kōloa, Benigno and his brothers lived in bachelors' quarters in New Mill Camp. His jobs included kālai and hāpai kō.

In 1932, Benigno moved to Kekaha Sugar Plantation. He worked there until 1938, when an aborted strike by Filipino laborers forced him to seek work elsewhere. Benigno returned to Kōloa and worked first in the mill, then as a truck driver and, finally, on a construction crew.

Benigno retired from Kōloa Sugar Company in 1969. He now works part-time as a yardman at Kiahuna Plantation, a resort hotel in Po'ipu. He lives in Kōloa with his wife Margarita, whom he married in 1965. They have two teenaged sons.

Tape No. 15-44-1-87  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Benigno Tapucol (BT)

June 25, 1987

Kōloa, Kaua'i

BY: Chris Planas (CP)

[NOTE: Also present at the interview is Margarita Tapucol (MT), BT's wife.]

CP: This is an interview with Benigno Tapucol on June 25, 1987 at his home in Kōloa, and the interviewer is Chris Planas.

Okay, I'm going to start from the very beginning. When were you born, Mr. Tapucol?

BT: Born Philippines. I was born February 8, February, yeah?

MT: February 8, 1908.

BT: Yeah, February 8, 1908.

CP: And where were you born?

BT: Philippines. Santo Domingo, Ilocos Sur.

CP: Do you remember your parents?

BT: Yes.

CP: What were your parents' names?

BT: My father's name Eulalio Tapucol. My mother is Roberta Tabbon.

CP: And what kind of city was---what kind of town was Santo Domingo?

BT: Farm.

CP: Farm?

BT: Yeah. Field, plant rice.

CP: Did you work on the farm? Did you grow up---did your family have a farm?

BT: Yes. Plant rice.

CP: Do you remember much about your childhood in the Philippines? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

BT: I get four brother and two sister.

CP: Four brothers and two sisters. And which one were you? Oldest, youngest?

BT: Middle. Me, I'm the second.

CP: And how long did you live in the Philippines?

BT: Twenty years.

CP: Twenty years? Until you come to Hawai'i?

BT: Yes.

CP: What did you do as a child, did you get to go to school?

BT: Only two years.

CP: Two years?

BT: Yeah. Because we are (chuckles) very poor.

CP: Did your town have a public school?

BT: Yeah, public school.

CP: Can you tell me much about it, the school?

BT: Flora. Flora, Santo Domingo, Ilocos Sur.

CP: Flora?

BT: Yeah. That is a barrio. Not in the town, that. Elementary school.

CP: Oh, and that was the name of the barrio?

BT: Yeah. Flora, Santo Domingo.

CP: What did your parents do for a living?

BT: Would only plant. Plant rice, that's all.

CP: Did they plant anything else?

BT: Sometime they produce the lime.

CP: Produce lime? How did they do that?

BT: You know that, we call over here, lime rock, and then we pile 'em up, and then fire 'em up, and then we burn 'em all until come all real good, and then [leave it] overnight. Then [when] all the fire no more, then we take out, and then [it becomes] just like that cement.

CP: Oh, I see.

BT: Yeah, before.

CP: How do you collect the lime?

BT: Oh, we take from the beach.

CP: So you lived near water, then? You lived near the ocean?

BT: Yeah. About ten mile to the beach.

CP: Oh. You go to the beach and you collect the lime?

BT: Yeah. The coral rock.

CP: Oh, from the coral rock?

BT: Yeah, coral rock. That one, we would fire 'em.

CP: What did you do with the lime after you burned it and hardened?

BT: That one, we take out from the place where fire up, and then we put the water. And then, [it becomes] just like a stone. So when we put water on top, come just like cement already.

CP: Oh, then after that what you do? What do you do with the lime?

BT: We sell 'em.

CP: What did they use the lime for?

BT: To put [i.e., build] the wall. They mix with the sand, that one, and then they put the brick, and then after that, just let 'em like that.

CP: Oh, okay. You lived ten miles from the beach, yeah?

BT: Yeah.

CP: How did you go back and forth?

BT: With a car. Not just like car over here. That wagon, I mean. Pull with the cow.

CP: Oh, wagon?

BT: Yeah, wagon.

CP: And you had cows and they pulled you?

BT: Yeah, cow.

CP: Was that how most people traveled in your village?

BT: Yeah. That's what we did before.

CP: They used wagons?

BT: Yeah. Before, [when] I live in Philippines, hardly got car yet. We only go with carabao, cow.

CP: Oh, I see. And you had them pull the wagon?

BT: Yeah. We load 'em [wagon] with the coral rock, and then we bring home. We heat the coral rock and then we chop, chop 'em.

CP: Oh, you crush 'em?

BT: Yeah. Cut coral.

CP: So then your family planted rice and made lime. And that was how your family earned a living?

BT: Yes, that's how my family earn a living.

CP: What did they do with the rice afterwards? After you harvest the rice?

BT: We pile up all that, and then just only for living [i.e., subsistence]. Some of the rich guys, they had land and we work in their land [in addition to our own], we plant rice. And then when harvest time, the owner take half, and for us the [other] half.

CP: Oh, so the property you live on, how big was it?

BT: Only the place of our house, only our property. But that's how we [worked] for living, for the rich guy.

CP: Oh, I see. So you lived near the rich man's house?

BT: [The rich man lived in] Vigan. About three miles [from Santo Domingo].

CP: [Three] miles away from [your] house?

BT: Yeah.

CP: When did you start working? You helped them plant rice, too?

BT: The rich guy?

CP: Yeah, your---did you help . . .

BT: Yeah, I helped my parents, too.

CP: So both your father and mother worked, plant rice?

BT: Yeah, yeah.

CP: How old were you when you started?

BT: Oh, I am about four years [old] I start for help them for plant rice, already. (Laughs)

CP: Four years old?

BT: Yeah. (Laughs) [When] we [were old enough to] walk over there before, oh, we got to help them, already.

MT: Not like over here that you work when come little bit bigger. Over there, no.

BT: You learn for work already. From small time, work.

CP: When did you go to school?

BT: We [went to] school, and then come home and then work again. (Laughs)

CP: Oh, I see. But you only go school two years, yeah?

BT: Yeah, two years only.

CP: How old were you when you went to school?

BT: Seven. Five, six or seven.

CP: So you go school in the morning. . . .

BT: Yeah, we go school in the morning until eleven o'clock, come home. And then after I eat [lunch] I go back again to school, and then go home about three o'clock. Then go help the parents work.

CP: And then what time do you come home after that?

BT: All depend on the sun. (Laughs) When dark, then got to go home.

MT: Philippines is different, you know. You leave in the morning seven o'clock, then [help] clean the school and the classroom, then eight o'clock or seven thirty, then the class is going start. Then when you go home, you got to clean again the room, then go home for eat. Then you go back to school again. Then in the afternoon you got to

clean the . . .

BT: Oh, the hard. Hard living I get before.

MT: You clean your own room because they no more custodian like that in our place.

CP: So you only had two years of school, the rest of the time you worked?

BT: Yes.

CP: Your brothers and sisters all worked, too?

BT: Worked too. Whatever they work, I help them.

CP: Everybody in the town farms also?

BT: Yeah, farm, mostly.

CP: But you said there were some rich people, yeah, in the town?

BT: No, no. That is in the capitol of our province [Vigan], that.

CP: Oh, I see. Those were Filipinos also?

BT: Yeah.

CP: How did they have so much money?

BT: Oh, they get plenty land, eh. Plenty land and most of the poor guys, poor people, they work for them.

CP: Did your parents work for one person or work for plenty, many different people?

BT: Oh, about three. Three person.

CP: Do you remember who they were?

BT: Oh, that I have forgotten already. But they are rich people.

CP: Do you remember much else about your town? For instance, did you have electricity?

BT: No, we don't have electricity.

CP: How did you have light? You used gasoline? What kind of lights did you use?

BT: Oil.

MT: Coconut oil.

BT: No. We don't have coconut oil in our town. We use bittaug. Just like the small nut, like that.

CP: What do you call it?

BT: Bittaug. (Laughs) We use that one.

CP: You use the oil?

BT: Yeah, we use the oil.

CP: Was there a store nearby that you could buy things from?

BT: No, they don't. We use our own. They don't sell that one. [BT is referring to bittaug.]

CP: Oh. But was there a store where you could buy things from?

BT: After a little bit come more rich, then we used to buy the kerosene.

CP: Where did you buy food and clothing and. . . .

BT: Oh, the store.

MT: In town.

CP: And how far . . .

BT: Two mile. About two mile.

CP: You can walk?

BT: Yeah, we walk. Even go to school, and go to the town, walk.

CP: How far was the school from your house?

BT: About one mile.

CP: Did any of your brothers and sisters get to go to school also?

BT: Only my brother, sister, there was. But my father, he no go. He can write nothing. For sure, he no can write.

CP: How about your mother?

BT: Yeah, my mother write. He [father] no can even---you know that paper money? Our father, he don't know whether one pesos or two pesos, he don't know. He only know the silver kind. But that paper money, he don't know much.

CP: In school you learned? You learned that?

BT: Oh, yeah.



CP: Did they teach you English in school?

BT: Yeah, teach me English. So when I come here, I learn, I pick up little by little, but very poor (chuckles). Some of the deep English, I don't know what it mean, but I can read it.

CP: How many people live in your barrio? Do you remember how many houses or how many families?

BT: Well, in my barrio is about ten house.

CP: That's all? Oh, that's small.

BT: Yeah. It's small.

CP: And it was pretty much just farm and sell lime?

BT: Yeah.

CP: Until you were twenty years old? The same thing?

BT: Yeah, yeah, same thing.

CP: Did your parents continue working up until then also?

BT: No, after we come to this island [i.e., Kaua'i] they are very old, they cannot do any selling lime.

CP: How old were your parents when you left Philippines?

BT: About fifty years old.

CP: Did you have any brother or sister that come to Hawai'i also?

BT: My oldest brother, he come first.

CP: Oh, that's right. Where did he go to?

BT: And then me and my [younger] brother also come to Hawai'i same time.

CP: Your oldest brother came first?

BT: Yeah.

CP: How many years before you come?

BT: Three years.

CP: And then you and another brother came?

BT: Yeah. We need the money for my transportation. Because that time I come, that's the first time [laborers had to] pay [for] transportation. Before no more, get all free. Before all free.

[In 1926, payment for the transportation of laborers to Hawai'i was discontinued by the Hawai'i Sugar Planters' Association.]

CP: So you had to pay your own way?

BT: Yeah.

CP: How much was it?

BT: One hundred eighty pesos.

CP: How come you had to pay? Why did you have to pay?

BT: Yeah, because that's the law before. They take out the free for transportation. If you like to come Hawai'i, then you pay your transportation. And then when you go home, then free after that. If you work here [Hawai'i] three years, then [the transportation back to the Philippines] free. Only when you come here, then you pay. Free the house, clothes, they give you. But we ride with the boat.

CP: How was it that you decided to come over? Why did you want to come to Hawai'i?

BT: Because I like to get a better living. Because in the Philippines, where we live is very hard, so my oldest brother come here. He told us that better living here to find a job. So I follow him.

CP: When you were in the Philippines, were you still living with your parents?

BT: Yes. Still living with my parents.

CP: What kind of house did you have?

BT: Just like wooden house, bamboo, like that. Bamboo, mostly bamboo.

CP: Did you have to make the house yourself?

BT: No, my parents, yeah.

CP: Your parents made the house.

BT: Yeah, yeah.

CP: Same, everybody else in the village the same thing, they had to make their own . . .

BT: No. Some they get the dry wood. Make 'em with wood.

CP: How big was your house?

BT: It's small.

CP: How many rooms were there?

BT: Not much room. No more that bedroom, just one parlor and then you get the mat, and then you lay every place. Yeah, only (chuckles) one parlor. No more rooms like that.

CP: Did you cook in the house?

BT: Get kitchen. All different.

CP: You had a kitchen?

BT: Yeah, get kitchen.

CP: How did you cook?

BT: With the bamboo, with the pot, with the clay. You know that make with clay? That's what we use.

CP: What was it, a pot or . . .

BT: Yeah, pot.

CP: How did you make the heat?

BT: Just put the fire under the pot and then boil 'em. But if you no like burn that you got to put the leaf [on the fire] first before you put the rice. Protect from the rice to burn.

CP: How about water? How did you get water?

BT: You carry the water. We can take the water from the well.

CP: Where was the well located?

BT: Just right there by the house.

CP: Did everyone have their own well?

BT: In our place we have only three well.

CP: Everybody share?

BT: Yeah. If you want the water, you go there.

CP: How did the wells get there? Did someone make the wells?

BT: Yeah, we make them. You dig down and then, in our place not so deep, about ten feet deep and then the spring already come out.

CP: Oh. And then when you take a bath where do you bathe?

BT: Just like cement [tub], but we made 'em from lime, brick, like that.

CP: This was outside, outside the house?

BT: Outside the house.

CP: Oh, what did you guys do for recreation?

BT: Recreation?

CP: Yeah. Did you go visit other parts of the province, or did you have dances or music?

BT: Yeah, we walk and then make any kind of decoration that thing. Take leaves, like that, decorations. Then if you like to go, you can go. We get party like that, you can go. If got wedding, you can go.

CP: Did you know very many people outside of your barrio?

BT: Outside?

CP: Yeah. Did you go outside a lot?

BT: Sure, sure. Before, just like you no scared, nothing. Any [part] of the town you can go, before. Nobody bothering you. All good friends before, not like now. Even you go to another town, when you go there they like friend you. Friend everybody.

CP: How was it that you got recruited? How did your brother get recruited for plantation work here?

BT: You mean how old?

CP: Well, how did he find out about Hawai'i? How did he know to come to Hawai'i? How did he first learn about working on plantation?

BT: Oh, oh. You know before, my uncle, he come first. So my uncle, he really like explain [about Hawai'i to] my brother. So my brother come. When my uncle come home, and then he explain [to us]. My brother stay here [Hawai'i], so I follow.

CP: Your uncle was---he worked plantation also?

BT: Yeah, in Hawai'i.

CP: Was he from Santo Domingo?

BT: Yeah.

CP: Did he live in the same barrio as you?

BT: Yeah, same barrio.

CP: Did someone come to your village or to your barrio to tell you about the plantation work?

BT: No. Only my uncle, he explain all about the plantation.

CP: How did you get to go? Did you have to sign a contract?

BT: Yeah. We signed the contract. Vigan is the capital [of Ilocos Sur], so they explain to us if you like to go Hawai'i, then you can present yourself. And then the doctor tell, if you like go Hawai'i, you come see us and then they examine you. And if you are good and you no more sick, then they allow you to come in Hawai'i.

CP: Who was "they"? Who was that?

BT: Vigan.

CP: Vigan?

BT: Vigan. The capitol of Ilocos Sur. The town, Vigan.

CP: But who examined you?

BT: The doctor. Filipino doctor.

CP: The officials, were they immigration officials?

BT: Yeah, immigration.

CP: Were there HSPA [Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association] people who recruit you?

BT: Yeah.

CP: Where did you go when you first, when your uncle told you about signing up for plantation?

BT: Just go there and present yourself.

CP: Go where?

BT: In Vigan.

CP: Which office did you go to? Do you remember?

BT: No, I don't remember. But the agent only tell you. They tell us.

CP: What agent?

BT: Filipino. The one agent for come to Hawai'i.

CP: Oh, I see. It must be HSPA agent.

BT: Yeah, HSPA.

CP: So you and your brother went?

BT: Yeah.

CP: Your other younger brother.

BT: Yeah, next to me.

CP: First your oldest brother went for three years. Did he come back?

BT: Yeah. Four years [in Hawai'i] and then he go home. And so me and my second brother, we live here until now. So we stay here [during] the war [i.e., World War II].

CP: What year was it that you came?

BT: Nineteen twenty-seven.

CP: Both you and your brother at the same time?

BT: Yeah.

CP: Where did you catch the boat?

BT: In Manila. I ride that truck from Vigan, the capital of Ilocos Sur.

CP: You ride the truck to . . .

BT: Yeah, until the town of Bauang, La Union. We stay there whole night.

CP: What was the name of that town?

BT: Bauang. Yeah. La Union. The next day we ride that train from Bauang to Manila.

CP: Then from Manila you catch a boat?

BT: Yeah.

CP: And what was the date that you left Philippines? Do you remember?

BT: Was March 11 I leave Manila when I ride the boat.

CP: Nineteen twenty-seven?

BT: Yeah.

CP: When did you arrive to Hawai'i?

(BT pauses to think.)

CP: Well, how long did it take you to ride the boat?

BT: About eight, no, twenty days.

CP: Twenty days?

BT: Yeah (laughs). From Manila to. . . .

CP: To Hawai'i.

BT: To Hawai'i.

CP: So you came . . .

BT: Twenty days in all. We went to Hong Kong, Shanghai, Kobe. . . .

CP: Did you get to stop at all those . . .

BT: Yeah, we stopped.

CP: You get to go off the boat at those times?

BT: No. They no allow us for go out.

CP: Bumbai you run away (chuckles)?

BT: No (chuckles). They got sick before.

CP: Oh. Did you get sick on the boat?

BT: Oh, yeah. When from Manila to Hong Kong, oh, I dizzy, I no get up. Throw out, vomit. (Laughs)

CP: Were there very many people getting sick on the boat, too?

BT: Plenty people. That boat they name President Grant.

CP: Oh, that was the name of the boat?

BT: Yeah. President Grant.

CP: When you came here, where did you go first, when you arrived in Hawai'i?

BT: Honolulu.

CP: Honolulu?

BT: Yeah. And then we come to [Kaua'i]. We went to Keālia first. Every plantation order how [many] people they like. So we don't have the chance to come Kōloa side. They send us to Keālia [Plantation].

CP: How long did you stay in Honolulu?

BT: Two days.

CP: Then did they send you and your brother to Keālia?

BT: Yeah. We were there about two months. Two months only. Then my brother here in Kōloa come pick us up over there.

CP: Oh, so your brother came to Kōloa first?

BT: Yeah, my oldest brother was living here, working in Kōloa Plantation before.

CP: What did you do in Keālia?

BT: The first time we worked, we pull the, what you call, the 'ōpala, and irrigating, hanawai, like that. Any kind [job] they like, we went. Sometimes we pick up cane on the road.

CP: You did that for two months in Keālia?

BT: Yeah.

CP: When you came to Kōloa, did both you and your brother come to Kōloa?

BT: Yeah.

CP: So there were three brothers, then, in Kōloa?

BT: Yeah. Three brothers. Kōloa.

CP: What did you do? What was your job when you first came here?

BT: Any kind. Any kind what they need us, we going. We did what they call kālai, hō hana.

CP: What was your first job in Kōloa?

BT: Kālai, they call hō hana.

CP: Eventually, did you get a regular job?

BT: No, any kind, yeah. Any kind. Not permanent. Whatever they need us, they take us.

CP: Well, eventually did you get one job?

BT: Yeah, one.

CP: Which kind of job was that?

BT: That carry the cane.

CP: Hāpai kō?

BT: Hāpai kō. That's my permanent job here before. Hāpai kō.



CP: Oh, I see. When did you work---how long did you work hāpai kō for?

BT: Oh, very long time, about. . . . In Kōloa about four years.

CP: So from 1927 till. . . .

BT: To '32.

CP: After that what did you do?

BT: I work for Kekaha [Plantation].

CP: Oh, you moved to Kekaha?

BT: Yeah. (Laughs) Nineteen thirty-two I moved to Kekaha. About [six] years again over there [until 1938].

CP: What did you do in Kekaha?

BT: Same thing, hāpai kō. Carry cane, yeah.

CP: Why did you move to Kekaha?

BT: I like find a better job again, but same thing, hard. But when during the [1938] strike [by Filipino workers at Kekaha Plantation, which was unsuccessful], we have every place strike and no more good cooperation strike. When the Japanese go work and us Filipino no work, no can get win, no more win. From Kekaha Plantation, we went to Waimea because we are a striker. So we stay there three months, no more win, so in Kōloa my friend [said], "Oh, more better you come Kōloa because they need plenty people over there to work." So, come back again [to Kōloa Plantation] until now.

CP: Who was the leader of the strike, do you remember?

BT: Antonio Fagel. Filipino. Antonio Fagel, the leader before, from America. [Fagel, who had been in California since 1917, returned to Hawai'i along with fellow labor organizer Pablo Manlapit in 1932 and rebuilt a Filipino labor organization called Vibora Luviminda.]

CP: Fagel?

BT: Yeah, Fagel. That's my townmate, too, that one.

CP: Oh, that's your townmate?

BT: Yeah, (laughs) Antonio Fagel.

CP: Now how long did the strike last?

BT: I don't know how many. . . . I went to go out to the strike, about four months. And then no can win because sometime go work, sometime is strike, the plantation no give up. So we go back again to work.

[In a later conversation, BT said that, while on strike in Kekaha, he stayed in an apartment in Waimea for 2-1/2 months. After the strike failed, BT remembered that he went directly back to Kōloa to resume work.]

CP: You stayed in Kekaha for [six] years?

BT: Yeah, 1938 I come back Kōloa.

CP: When you worked hāpai kō 1927 to 1932, where did you live?

BT: I live here before, 1932.

CP: Which part of Kōloa?

BT: This side, all around, by the mill. All around Kōloa Plantation, all around before.

CP: You moved plenty?

BT: Yeah.

CP: You didn't stay in one house?

BT: No, we stay in one house, but I mean to say there were [different] places we hāpai kō. Every field they cut, we go in.

CP: Oh, I see. Do you remember what kind of house you lived in?

BT: We live in the big house, long house, before. Long house [i.e., rooming house for bachelors].

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

CP: Okay, I'm sorry, you were saying you lived in a long house?

BT: Yeah.

CP: How many rooms were there in that house? How many people live in there?

BT: About eight [people]. In one room, two. Sometime if your friend come, you stay in that, one room. Our bed, wooden bed just like our. . . . We make the wood just like bed, and then we put the mat, and then we sleep on there.

CP: Just like sleep on table, eh?

(Laughter)

CP: So you stayed there with your two brothers, too, yeah?

BT: Yeah. We stay with brother.

CP: How many rooms?

BT: Four.

CP: That's a long house.

BT: Yeah. And then divide that one long house into two. One kitchen to the side. But four room.

CP: Each room had two people?

BT: Yeah. If somebody going come with you, sometime four inside one room. (Laughs) In one bed made of wood. Just like sardine you stay there. (Laughs)

CP: And where was this house located?

BT: By the [Kōloa] Mill before, located by the mill.

CP: Was there a name for the place that it was in?

BT: They call New Mill.

CP: New Mill Camp?

BT: Yeah, New Mill Camp, because near the mill.

CP: And you lived in that house until you moved Kekaha?

BT: Yeah.

CP: When you moved Kekaha where did you live?

BT: Oh, I lived in that houses again in Kekaha.

CP: You lived with your friend, yeah?

BT: Yeah. But more small room over there. Sometimes in one small room we are five (chuckles). As long you can [lean] your back to sleep, 'nough (chuckles).

CP: Why did you move to Kekaha?

BT: Because we don't know, they said better living there. We try because Kōloa side more rain, and Kekaha no more rain. Hot. So we tired for rain all the time in Kōloa so we like the sun place. Kekaha, sunny again, no more rain, nothing.

CP: But then you decided you wanted to come back to Kōloa?

BT: I decided to come back to Kōloa during the strike.

CP: When you came back to Kōloa, was 1938?

BT: Yeah.

CP: What kind of job did you get?

BT: Get hāpai kō again.

CP: How long did you work hāpai kō in Kōloa?

BT: Long time already. I don't know how many years already. Until they send me to work in the mill, I worked hāpai kō.

CP: When you came back to Kōloa where did you live then?

BT: Same, by the mill, but the new houses already. New houses.

CP: What kind of house did you live in then?

BT: Oh, the nice house. All just now new that time. We are the first guy go inside the new houses there before. Good houses, that one.

CP: And how many people lived in your house?

BT: Eight.

CP: So it was a big house.

BT: Yeah, nice house before.

CP: And what happened to your brothers?

BT: Still yet over here.

CP: Still here?

BT: Yeah.

CP: Your oldest brother, did he live in the new house with you?

BT: Yeah, he stay yet over there.

CP: And your other---did all you three brothers always stay together? Live together?

BT: Yes. My [oldest] brother went home [to the Philippines], eh, that time.

CP: Oh, your brother went home?

BT: Yeah. Four years only stay Hawai'i, then go home.

CP: So you were here by yourself then?

BT: Only my brother, my second brother.

CP: Oh, I see. When did you get the job in the mill?

BT: Oh, for making steam in the mill for cook the juice [made from] sugar. And hard job again, that one.

CP: Do you remember when you got that job?

BT: I don't know what year that one already.

CP: Was it before the war [i.e., World War II]?

BT: No, after.

CP: What did you do in the mill?

BT: Feeding the boiler. Feeding the bagasse for burn so the fire boil the water for make steam. The steam for cook the juice for make sugar.

CP: How did you feed the bagasse into the . . .

BT: You use the fork. We call 'em manamana, the fork for feed 'em like that. When not enough steam, you feed 'em. You [look at the] gauge for the steam, eh. When they hundred and fifty [degrees], above. And then when they go down to hundred, ah, you feed 'em, feed 'em until come up, the steam. Hard job. That one more hard than hapai kō.

CP: So you use a pitchfork and feed the bagasse into the boilers?

BT: Yeah. And how hot! Only in your undershirt stay, and then you keep on going even how hot. Ah!

CP: How long did you work at that job?

BT: About three years.

CP: And all that time you lived in the new house [in] New Mill Camp?

BT: Uh huh [yes].

CP: And then after that job what did you do?

BT: Drive truck.

CP: Oh, drive truck?

BT: Yeah, that's the last. I take that job for construction in the field, they making new road in the field. We go there, make good

the road, take the stone, pile up. And after they finished all the construction they take me to the crush stone, they call that "crush stone." They suggest if I like to work there to drive truck again, so I go there to the crush stone, same company again.

CP: Do you remember what year it was that you got your job driving truck?

BT: I cannot quite remember already. But I know that's the last work I make already until I pension. That's the last.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

CP: That was your last job?

BT: Yeah, that's my last job, till I pension.

CP: What did you have to do for that job?

BT: To bring the truck to load the stone, and bring to the place where they dump the stone. And you dump the stone and then get the carrier for carry the stone, then feed to the crush stone.

CP: Did you have to lift the stones?

BT: No, the truck get a dumper. Then he feed to the crusher.

CP: So you didn't have to lift, you just drive the trucks?

BT: Yeah, only to drive.

CP: So was that a easier job?

BT: Yeah, easy, that kind job.

CP: And then you worked at that job for how long? Long time?

BT: That long time already. But I don't know how many years (chuckles) that one already.

CP: Was that a better paying job?

BT: Huh?

CP: The pay. Was it better pay?

BT: More pay, that one. More pay.

CP: How much did you get paid for that one?

BT: That one is depend on how we make. If you can make [i.e., carry] more, more good they going give us. Just like contract.

CP: At that time when you first got the job driving truck, were you still living in New Mill?

BT: Yeah. I living there, yeah.

CP: When did you move from New Mill?

BT: (BT misunderstands question.) Six-thirty we arrive to the transportation [section at] Grove Farm. Bring us there and then we jump to that crusher.

CP: Yeah. Well, did you just live from New Mill Camp in that new house? You said you lived in a new house, yeah? How long did you live there for until you came here?

BT: Wait. . . . Nineteen thirty, fifty. . . .

CP: I'm trying to find out how many different places you lived. I'm trying to figure out how many different houses you lived in Kōloa all the time that you've been here.

BT: Only two. Only two. This number three, our own [i.e., BT's present home].

CP: Oh, I see. So you only lived in two. You live in one big house first, then you live in the new house in New Mill, and then you moved to here?

BT: Yeah. Only two house. I live in Kōloa Plantation.

CP: When did you move to this house?

BT: Nineteen sixty. . . . I don't know. My wife, she know that. Sixty something.

CP: What year did you retire?

BT: Sixty-nine [1969].

CP: And when did you go to the Philippines?

BT: Oh, before I retire I go to the Philippines to get my wife.

CP: Do you remember what year that was? Do you remember when you were married?

BT: (Laughs) I should. I don't remember all that one.

CP: So 1965?

BT: Nineteen sixty-five, I think.

CP: You went back---where did you go when you went to the Philippines?

BT: My town.

CP: Your town? Santo Domingo?

BT: Santo Domingo, and then I travel again to Cagayan [a province in the northeastern part of Luzon], so I get my wife.

CP: All this time before 1965 you were a bachelor, yeah? All the time before 1965, before you get married, you were a bachelor?

BT: Yeah, I come back here. I stay there [Philippines] only four months after marry her there. Before they give us six months vacation, but I no can make the six month. Four month I stay in the Philippine, I come back here. I stay here.

CP: Who paid for your vacation? Who paid for your trip back to Philippines?

BT: Oh, when I go Philippine, that's free. That's the contract of our coming Hawai'i before. Free. But when I come back here again, I pay.

CP: Oh, I see. And you brought your wife back with you?

BT: My wife, he [i.e., she] no come back. Only myself.

CP: Oh, so you came back by yourself and your wife stayed in the Philippines?

BT: Yeah, he [i.e., she] stay back yet in the Philippines.

CP: When did she come over?

BT: He [i.e., she] stay there [Philippines] two years after, and then he [i.e., she] come over here. Follow.

CP: Oh, I see. Did you give her the money to come?

BT: Yeah. He [i.e., she] like continue his [i.e., her] school yet, eh, that time. My wife stay in the school yet.

CP: Oh, your wife was still in school?

BT: Yeah, he's [i.e., she's] still in school yet, so he [i.e., she] like continue until he [i.e., she] graduate, and then he [i.e., she] come, follow me.

CP: You were saying that when you were plantation, when you were bachelor days, you used to---what other---did you used to do other things to make money?

BT: Yeah, drive truck again, same thing.

CP: You were saying that you had raised and, you raised and buy chickens.



BT: Oh, when I planning to marry I no go fight chicken already.

CP: But before that?

BT: Before that, (chuckles) any kind gamble like that. I go drink and sometime I go with the taxi dance too. Before got taxi dance over here on Kaua'i. Social box. But when I plan to marry, ah, I no go no more.

CP: Well, when you were raising chickens, did you make money from that?

BT: Ah, only for good time. I only raise chicken for my good time for fight chicken. Sometime when you go chicken fight, sometime you good luck, sometime you meet your hard luck. Same thing.

CP: Do you remember where they used to have the chicken fights?

BT: All around. Any place before. All around. No matter what place you go, get plenty chicken. Not like now. They watch you all the time now. Before just like free, good time. Sometime we owner, sometime they owner, got plenty.

CP: Where would they have the fights at in Kōloa?

BT: This side. This side.

CP: Where about?

BT: All the ragged house. Plantation. Not like now, all good. Before, just a small road, just like your car no can go.

CP: Did you have a yard, somebody's house where they fight the chickens?

BT: Yeah, they make in one yard. They get yard like that.

CP: And you take your chickens down to fight also?

BT: Sure. Just hold 'em, no more box before. Plenty chicken. Every house before get plenty, plenty chicken no matter where you go.

CP: Did you take the chicken to fight? Or did you take and sell?

BT: No, I take the chicken, fight.

CP: And then people pay---they place bet on your chicken?

BT: Yeah. If your---some guy, they follow you, they like your chicken, they follow you [i.e., they gave him money to bet on his chicken]. If your bet, more plenty. And then ask to another on the side and they put some. But if they no can cover all, they cut down. If you get more, then you cut down. [In a later conversation, BT said that, in betting at the chicken fights, one side's bet would have to be matched by another. If one side had more money and the other

side didn't have as much, "no can cover," then the side with more money would lower his amount, "cut down," so the bet would be even.] If just like this before, longer day, huh, sometime and they put the light yet. Sometime every come, even Kīlauea to Kekaha, oh, got plenty.

CP: You didn't make too much money, then?

BT: I meet only my good luck. Sometime, one year. That's all.

CP: Did you have to prepare them for fighting, too? Did you put the gaff on the leg like that?

BT: No, no. Somebody else.

CP: Oh, somebody else did that for you?

BT: Yeah, for the knife.

CP: How many chickens did you have at one time usually?

BT: The highest I take care of my chickens, about fifty.

CP: Fifty?

BT: Fifty. (Laughs) Yeah, it's true. Fifty.

CP: And you kept them in your yard?

BT: Yeah, we kept, make 'em in our yard. Make their house.

CP: What did you feed them?

BT: Chicken feed.

CP: Did you make a special blend?

BT: No. You got to buy. Plenty, you buy (chuckles).

CP: What kind of things you look for to raise chicken?

BT: Corn.

CP: You look for corn?

BT: Corn, grind the corn.

CP: Well, do you try to breed certain ones, chickens, right? Do you look for certain color or certain things for the chicken to mate? You know when you mate the chickens? You mate the hen and the rooster?

BT: Oh, oh, you like mix them?

CP: Yeah.

BT: All depend on the color of the hen and the rooster.

CP: Oh, like what?

BT: You like change to the color of what you raise, you change the hen and then he come to another color. Or else, you change the rooster. Same hen, but you change the rooster. And then you get another color of that coming out. That's how they make.

CP: How about if you're looking to make a good fighting chicken?

BT: Yeah. You can make practice them, and you can watch how they going. And some, too slow, and some only fly, fly, and no kick, no good. You can see the rooster, he go and make the leg together and make like this [BT indicates rooster bending legs and bringing feet up], then that's the good one. If only go for fly, fly, only make the leg only straight, no can. No can make. If the one only make straight the leg when he fly when you practice, kill 'em, eat em. (Laughs) That's what we do. We choose the good one.

CP: And then you make them breed with hens to make more?

BT: Yeah. If you have good rooster, then that's the one you make for breed.

CP: How long did you raise chickens for?

BT: About ten years. (Laughs) Long time.

CP: When did you quit?

BT: Before I plan to marry, and then I quit.

CP: Oh, so you quit before you go to the Philippines?

BT: Yeah. I quit already. Still now, I don't go.

CP: And then you told me you played music, yeah, before?

BT: Yeah.

CP: How did you start to play music? Did you play music in the Philippines?

BT: No. They only tell me to join them over here because their accompany, he going away, home to the Philippines, and nobody to hold [i.e., play] the bass. But I don't know nothing. But I learn. I hear, like that, so they tell me, "You can take care this one?"

But I tell them, "I don't know."

So, "You try." But I can hear the sound of the music. I can tell the different. . . . So I try and then I make, we try. "You going be good." So after all like that, learn like that, so come good.

But I don't know how to read the note. Only by listening with the ear. So they are surprised. "How you know how to play this one? You don't know how to read the note." He tell.

"Only by hearing, by ear."

"But you better know how to make the note, read the note."

"I don't know," I tell him.

When get the taxi dance, make music, sometime if they no [more] accompany, they call me. Sometime the taxi dance when they don't have the accompany for hold the bass, and the guy no more time for go. So they call me, I go.

CP: When did you start playing bass? What year was that? Do you remember?

BT: Was thirty, wait. . . . Nineteen forty.

CP: Just before the war started?

BT: Yeah.

CP: You played for different groups or you played for one group?

BT: No. All different. Sometime any group, if they need me, then I go. As long they tell me they make the sound of the note, then I can hear, then I can. . . . My own tuning. They read the note, but me I no read the note because I don't know. Too bad. (Laughs)

CP: Was there any one group that you played with plenty?

BT: About only---not too much, only about six only. Six people only.

CP: Well, is there any group that you played with more often than others?

BT: No, no.

CP: I talked to someone and they said they remember you played with Ligaya Orchestra.

BT: Visaya.

CP: Or Ligaya. Is that Ligaya Orchestra?

BT: No, no. [Later BT said he played with Ligaya Orchestra.]

(Wife returns.)

BT: What year we come this house?

MT: Nineteen sixty-seven. (Inaudible.)

CP: And you moved into this house in 1967?

MT: Oh, this one? No, '74. Maybe about. We stayed by the New Mill by the plantation house, so I went over there 1967. So we moved over there in December. December, 1974.

CP: And you had two small children then, yeah?

MT: Uh huh.

CP: And I was going to ask you, when you played music what kind of songs did you play?

BT: Any kind. We played some Tagalog, like that.

CP: Filipino songs?

BT: Yeah. Even Hawaiian.

CP: Hawaiian songs, too?

BT: As long the leader can play the Hawaiian, I can follow him.

CP: And so sometimes did you know---somebody call you up and tell you they want you to play. Sometimes did you know what they were going to play before you go. . . .

BT: Yeah. I go with them and then I know.

CP: You must have been a good bass player, then.

BT: (Laughs) Little bit. Not much. But for sure I no can read the note. Only memory.

CP: But you just follow along the leader? The leader tell you where to . . .

BT: Yeah. As long they give me the sound of what they going play, I know already what my bass going make.

CP: Did you mostly play with other Filipinos?

BT: Yeah, all Filipino.

CP: What kind of other instruments did they have?

BT: Sometime they play saxophone, sometime bandolin and that, but mostly

saxophone. And one violin, the one who was leading.

CP: And what other kind of instruments?

BT: Only saxophone, violin, bandolin. . . .

CP: Bandolin?

BT: Yeah. Three, three kind.

CP: And then bass?

BT: Yeah. Me, I hold the bass only.

CP: How much money would you make usually when you played?

BT: Ah (chuckles), all depend if they give a small pay. Not contract (laughs).

CP: Like how much did you get paid?

BT: Sometime two dollar, (laughs) right? Because only cheap, eh, before.

CP: But then that's pretty good, eh. Because you make one dollar working in plantation, right? [By 1940, workers were making an hourly wage.]

BT: Work olden days, we work ten hours, one dollar. (Laughs) Ten hours. From morning your pants sweat until to the head, until four o'clock. No more rest. Working, working.

CP: Do you remember any of the other leaders that you played music with? Their names?

BT: Oh, Matteo. Matteo Paraguas. And Pabian Etrata.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

CP: Did the group have a name? You mentioned a Visaya Orchestra?

BT: Yeah, wait, wait, wait, wait. . . . They call "Mabuhay." (Laughs) They put two name, eh. Then the other one is "Bannawag." What they call "Bannawag." (Laughs)

CP: Bannawag Orchestra?

BT: Yeah, Bannawag Orchestra.

CP: And you play outside of Kōloa also?

BT: Yeah.

CP: What other kind of places you play at?

BT: Kapa'a, Hanapēpē, sometime we go Kekaha. Mostly Kapa'a.

CP: What kind of things you played for?

BT: Oh, the taxi dance.

CP: Taxi dance?

BT: Yeah. In Kapa'a. Party, like that, or social box. [A "social box" was a social function held on the plantations, primarily for Filipinos. Young Filipino females, often in their teens, would dress up for the occasion and bring with them a gift-wrapped item, usually something to eat. The Filipino bachelors in attendance would bid on this item, and the highest bidder would win the gift as well as a dance with the girl who brought it. Music was provided by orchestras described by BT. For a more detailed explanation of the social box, see interview with Rosalina Labrador Wagner.]

CP: You played music every weekend?

BT: No. Only they pick up me when they need me.

CP: How many times a month?

BT: Two time a month.

CP: Oh, that's pretty good, then, eh? When did you stop?

BT: When they stop. When the other guy, our leader, go home P.I. [i.e., Philippines], we no start already, and the other guy die already, I no go already.

CP: Do you still have your bass?

BT: Before I get, but no more. I wen sell 'em already.

CP: Oh, you sell 'em. Stand-up bass?

BT: Yeah, before my wife come I wen sell 'em already.

CP: I think this is a good time to stop.

BT: All right already, that one.

END OF INTERVIEW

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